

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety/Death threats

21 February 2003

ARGENTINA

**Clara Britos (f), journalist
Members of her family**

On the evening of 14 February 2003 Clara Britos was violently accosted near her house by three unidentified individuals who threatened to kill her and her family. This is the latest in a series of threats and intimidating behaviour that Clara Britos has suffered. Amnesty International is gravely concerned for her safety and that of her family.

Clara Britos is the owner and editor of the monthly newspaper *La Tapa* in Guernica, Buenos Aires Province. She has continually been subjected to death threats and intimidation following the publication of articles in her newspaper, highlighting cases of corruption in the municipality of Pte. Perón, and the alleged involvement of the municipal authorities in the violent repression of demonstrations in the area.

The newspaper has reported cases of corruption in the municipality of Pte. Perón which implicated the former mayor (*ex-intendente*), who is currently a high-ranking member of the *Servicio de Inteligencia del Estado* (SIDE), State Intelligence Service. It has also reported the alleged beating of three teachers by the police, following a demonstration on 29 May 2002. The latter has led to an increase in the harassment suffered by Clara Britos.

Clara Britos has received emails with the message "*muerte a los amigos de los piqueteros*", "death to friends of the protestors". In June and July 2002 a red Ford Falcon car was frequently parked outside her house. The driver directed death threats against her on three separate occasions, warning her not to continue her journalistic investigations.

She has also received several threatening telephone calls, including one where she was told "*no vayas a la marcha, estás mas calentita en tu casa que en una zanja*", "don't go on the march, you'll be warmer in your house than in a ditch." The march commemorates the deaths of two *piqueteros* (protesting unemployed workers), Darío Santillán and Maximiliano Costeki who had taken part in a demonstration in front of the Pte. Perón town hall on 11 June 2002. They were killed, allegedly by the police, during another demonstration on June 26 2002 and the incident is currently the subject of a judicial investigation.

Clara Britos has filed judicial complaints regarding the death threats before the Public Prosecutor (*Fiscalía*) of La Plata, Buenos Aires Province. Amnesty International is concerned that the authorities have apparently not investigated these complaints.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Journalists in Argentina are often faced with threats and intimidation as they investigate the alleged involvement of public officials in corruption. Many have also been victims of violent police repression whilst covering protests at the continuing economic crisis in Argentina, and are subsequently threatened when their reports are published or broadcast. A report from the *Asociación para la Defensa del Periodismo Independiente* (PERIODISTAS) Association for the Defence of Independent Journalism states that attacks against the Argentine press increased by 15 per cent in 2002.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at the continuous threats and harassment to which Clara Britos and her family have been subjected;

- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into these threats, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- asking for assurances that the Argentine authorities take all necessary steps to protect Clara Britos and her family, and that she be allowed to perform her legitimate work as a journalist without threats and harassment.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of Buenos Aires Province

Sr. Gobernador de la Provincia de Buenos Aires

Ing. Felipe Carlos Solá

Casa de Gobierno

Calle 6 Entre 51/53

1900 La Plata

Prov. Buenos Aires, Argentina

Telegrams: **Governor, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina**

Fax: **+ 54 221 429 4189**

Salutation: **Sr. Gobernador/ Dear Governor**

Minister of Justice and Security of Buenos Aires Province

Sr. Ministro de Justicia y Seguridad de la Provincia de Buenos Aires

Dr Juan Pablo Cafiero

Calle 2 e/51 y 53

1900 La Plata

Prov. Buenos Aires, Argentina

Telegrams: **Minister of Justice and Security, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina**

Fax: **+ 54 221 429 3187/3188 (If someone answers say 'Fax, por favor')**

Salutation: **Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister**

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto

Dr. Carlos Ruckauf

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Esmeralda 1212

1003 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Telegrams: **Foreign Minister, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

Fax: **+ 54 11 4819 7619/7359**

Salutation: **Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister**

COPIES TO:

Under-Secretary for Human Rights

Sr. Subsecretario de Derechos Humanos

Dr. Oscar Fappiano

Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos

Humanos

Sarmiento 329

1041 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: **+ 54 11 4381 4571**

(There could be some problems getting through to this number. If someone answers say 'Fax, por favor')

Asociación para la Defensa del Periodismo

Independiente – PERIODISTAS

Piedras 1675 Oficina B

Secretaría de Derechos

1140 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: **+ 54 11 4300 6149**

Newspapers

Clarín
Tacuarí 1840
1139 Buenos Aires, Argentina
Fax: + 54 11 4309 7200

Página 12
Avenida Belgrano 673
1092 Buenos Aires, Argentina
Fax: + 54 11 4334 2330

and to diplomatic representatives of ARGENTINA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 April 2003.